

## **Ambassador Zoellick talks to reporters after breakfast with Colombian President Uribe**

Blair House

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8:30 am

Zoellick - Well I was delighted and honored that the President would see me for the breakfast. As you know I was down in Colombia for his inauguration and I had a chance to meet with him there, as well as outgoing President Pastrana, as well as many members of the cabinet.

And it gave us a chance to review, again, the many aspects of his strategy. Obviously focusing on many security topics with the President, but we talked about a number of the economic topics; which are fundamental in terms of being able to have the economic security of Colombia that complements what one is dealing with the narco-traffickers and others.

In particular, we talked about the trade issues. Obviously, Congress has now passed the Andean Trade Preference Act. That went into effect at the time of passage for the products that had been covered under the prior provisions. We are now in a position to try to work with Colombia on qualifying under the statutory criteria for for some of the new benefits. And we talked about that process. And I think you'll hear more about that later today.

Q- Did you talk about something in particular on that issue?

Zoellick- I talked about our interest in trying to move it forward very quickly and as I said, the Presidents will be meeting and I think you'll hear more about that.

And then we also talked about other aspects of our bilateral trade relationship. The President emphasized the importance of coffee and some of the ideas he had on coffee, which we said we would try to examine related to grades of coffee. And we talked about our work together in the ALCA, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and Colombia is a good partner. Because we'll be having a ministerial in Quito on November 1.

We talked about the WTO round, the Doha round, where again, we work with Colombia on these issues.

And then we put this in the context of some of the other issues that the President will be going up, as you know, to New York to talk to the financial community. And he explained to me his actions in terms of the budget, his revenue raising, his cutting expenditures, and his overall element of trying to have a strong healthy Colombian economy. That backs what he's trying to do.

And I just emphasized, as I have before, that he is certainly a person that has demonstrated a very rapid start for Colombia. I think it's a bold program. I think it's got many dimensions that are mutually supportive. And to the degree I could, I offered him encouragement, support, and my offer to try to be of help anywhere I can.

Q- So we will something later today about the preference act, but has the government decided something about it? because the Colombian government is waiting for something today.

Zoellick - You're a good reporter, but you're not that good.

(Laughter)